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April 14, 2010

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Marvin J. Southard, D.S.W.
Director of Mental Health

SUBJECT: **SAFETY COMPLAINT FOR NORTHEAST MENTAL HEALTH CENTER**

This letter is in response to the March 25, 2010, complaint letter from numerous employees at the Northeast Mental Health Center.

The employees are claiming injuries resulting from the construction. The Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) we recently received from the manufacturer confirmed that no industrial materials were used during renovation. Rather, the materials that were used are comparable to general household cleaners and cannot cause any of the dangerous symptoms that were described in the complaint.

While employees have expressed concerns about a failure of management to provide notice to the employees regarding the timing of the repairs, the Department was not aware of these activities until after the repairs had started and employees complained. As a result of these unfortunate events, the building proprietor has made a commitment to refrain from conducting any future repair work at the facility without prior notice to the Department. The proprietor is also required to agree that a Department designee be present during all future assessments for repair and renovation work to ensure that the repairs do not occur during a time when employees are present.

To ensure the health and safety of our employees, the Department has implemented all recommendations of the Chief Executive Office Risk Management Division regarding the maintenance of the Heating, Ventilating, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system, including all of the following:

- Operate the HVAC system continuously until the paint odor dissipates.
- Ensure that the dampers are operating properly.
- Discontinue the practice of closing the overhead return and air supply registers.
- Verify the integrity of the ventilation ducts for damage and blockage.

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- Ensure that the HVAC system providing ventilation is maintained and serviced in accordance with the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning (ASHRAE).
- Obtained and analyzed the MSDS regarding the materials that were used during renovation.
- Schedule all future renovation work and painting activities during hours when the building is unoccupied and allow sufficient time for chemical odors to dissipate before occupants return to the building.
- Ensure that building management provides advanced notice to the Department of Mental Health personnel regarding specific renovations or repairs to be performed and the schedule of such renovations and repairs.

In addition, on April 14, 2010, staff from the Human Resources Bureau and the clinic will meet with all concerned employees to ensure that there are no remaining issues.

The management of the Department of Mental Health takes the health and safety of our employees very seriously. Although the incident at the facility was unfortunate, it did not result from any knowing or malicious action on the Department's part. We hope that the Department's post-incident action reaffirmed our commitment to employees' health and safety.

MJS:RK:MM:SAW:am

c: Robin Kay, Ph.D., Chief Deputy Director
Margo Morales, Administrative Deputy
Susan Moser, Departmental Human Resources Manager III
Shelli Amber Weekes, Administrative Services Manager III